

**Testimony submitted to the Education Committee  
on  
HB 5447 – AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF AUDITORS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS CONCERNING PRIVATE  
PROVIDERS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Wednesday, March 14, 2018**

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischman, Representative Lavielle and members of the Education Committee Hartford HealthCare appreciates the opportunity to comment in opposition to HB 5447.

The Hartford HealthCare (HHC) Behavioral Health Network (BHN) schools, which are under the umbrella of Rushford, Institute of Living and Natchaug, have serious concerns regarding this proposal as it has the potential to negatively impact some of our most vulnerable students.

These students, who have not been able to successfully integrate into traditional school settings, rely on providers like our BHN Schools to help them achieve academic success and integrate into society later in life. Requiring the Education Department to establish a rate schedule for special education would limit a provider's ability to deliver the comprehensive educational and mental health services these students require. As the committee considers this proposal, HHC would like you to consider the following:

- One special education setting does not equal another. As of now, rates are negotiated individually, and standardized rates would not support the many levels of services provided by various schools, which go well beyond academics. The mental health services needed by students vary widely, so standard rates for all schools could result in lack of funding for services that students clearly need.
- If there are concerns related to referrals from particular school districts, please understand many times it is not a per-child contract -- we receive an annual amount and serve all students who need our services. Furthermore, since the services stipulated in contracts may change during the contracted

term (usually a school year, August-June), this bill would require unnecessary revisions of contracts on a routine basis.

- Rate setting may impact our ability to fully meet the complex and diverse needs of the students we serve as well as our ability to be innovative with our programming. Issues to consider include:
  - Composition of professional qualified staff, including areas of expertise and licensing/certification to provide specialized care.
  - Complexity and diversity of the students and their needs.
  - Continuum of care provided to students whose needs cannot be met in traditional public school settings.

Thank you for considering our testimony and for your interest in students with special needs. With support from the Education Committee, and continued flexibility regarding rates, we can continue to provide the appropriate learning environment and mental health services for students who need them.

For more information please contact:

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